

Discipling Through Asking Questions

“The important thing is not to stop questioning.” Albert Einstein

Consider how God ask questions with a difficult discipleship situation in Genesis 3:8-13

“The capacity to ask fresh questions in conditions of ignorance, risk, and confusion, when nobody knows what to do next.” John Morris (1991)

Questions by their very nature allow individuals and teams to be more receptive to adapting, changing, and growing.

What is the most important skill of a leader? Many cite the ability to ask the right questions.

Open Questions

These give a high degree of freedom in how to respond.

What kind of things do you enjoy doing?

What comes easily to you?

What dreams or desire do you have?

What things satisfy or reenergize you?

What excites you?

What kind of expectations do you have about your life?

What would you like to do when you finish DTs?

What are your abilities?

What kind of training would you like to receive?

Where would you like to see yourself in five years?

What would you say are some of your key strengths?

Tell me something about yourself that made you feel great?

What would you like to do if there were no hindrances?

What is your heart beating for?

Affective questions

Invites people to share feelings about an issue

How did you feel about your presentation?

If you had to choose a colour to describe your feelings about your team, what colour would that be and why?

What was your initial reaction?

What was your gut reaction?

What emotion did it stir inside you?

What word would best describe that emotion?

Reflective questions

Encourage more elaboration

You said she annoys you, what do you think leads to that response?

You said you were stressed, what do you find difficult to do when you are under stress?

Can you help me understand what is going on in you?

What did you mean when you said that?

What do you think were the three key points of the lecture and why?

What do you think was the cause of that reaction?

How can you explain the change in the atmosphere of the group?
Does the situation remind you?
What exactly happened?
What is it in you that makes you feel that way about that person?

Probing questions

Cause the person to go into more depth or breadth
Why is this happening?
What did the situation trigger in you?

Fresh questions

Challenge basic assumptions
Must it be that way? Has this ever been tried?

Questions that create connections

Systems perspective
What might be the consequences of these actions?

Clarifying questions

Result in further descriptions and explanations
Are you saying that . . . ?
Could you explain more about the situation?

Explorative questions

Open up new avenues and insights and lead to new explorations
Have you thought of . . . ?
Would . . . have anything to help with that?

Analytical questions

Examines causes and not just symptoms
Why has this problem happened?

Closed questions

Can be answered with yes or no, or a quantitative (number) response.
How many people will be affected?
Do you agree with this decision?

Leading questions

encourage or force the person to respond in the way intended by the questioner
Don't you think you should have . . . ?
You thought I wouldn't notice, didn't you?

GREAT Questions

Cause us to focus and/or stretch
Create deep reflection
Challenge taken for granted assumptions that prevent us from acting in new and forceful ways
Are difficult to answer and may take courage to ask
Lead to breakthrough thinking
Contain the keys that open the door to great solutions

Are fresh questions raised in “conditions of ignorance, risk, confusion, or when nobody knows what to do next”

Are supportive, insightful, and challenging

Are unpretentious and offered in a sharing spirit

Are selfless, not asked to illustrate the cleverness of the questioner or to generate information or an interesting response for the questioner

Open up the problem owner’s view of the situation

Open doors in the mind and get people to think more deeply

Test assumptions and cause people to explore why and how they act

Generate action

Great questions are asked at the time when they will generate the most reflection and learning?